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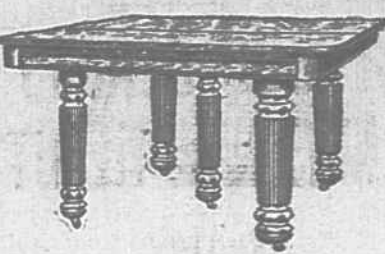
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THE FORTUNE HUNTER

Novellized by
LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE
From the Play of the
Same Name by
WINCHELL SMITH

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and Louis Joseph Vance

(Continued from yesterday.)

"But—there must be some mistake," Graham repeated pleadingly. "It can't be. Mr. Lockwood surely wouldn't." "Now, there, ain't he one whinin' about it?" Whining, roared him into silence. "Law, he law and—He ceased quickly, surprised to find Duncan standing between him and his prey. "What?" he began.

"Wait!" Duncan touched him gently on the chest with a forefinger, at the same time catching and holding the sheriff's eye. "Are you," he inquired quietly, "laboring under the impression that Mr. Graham is dead?" "What?"

Duncan turned to Sam apologetically. "He said 'what.' Did you hear it, sir?"

But by this time Pete was recovering to some degree. "What're you got to say about this?" he demanded Caspando.

"I'll show you," Duncan told him to the same quiet voice, "what I've got to say if you'll just put the soft pedal on and tell me the amount of that note."

"With interest and costs," he said less stridently. "It figures up three hundred 'n' eighty dollars 'n' eighty-two cents."

There's no use denying that Duncan was staggered. For the moment his poise deserted him utterly. He could only repeat, as one who dreams, "Three hundred and eighty dollars!" His momentary consternation afforded Pete the opening he needed. The room shook with his regained sense of prestige.

"Yes, three hundred 'n' eighty dollars 'n'— Say, you look a-her!" Again the calm forefinger touched him and like a hypnotist's pass checked the rolling volume of noise. "Listen," begged Duncan. "If you've got anything else to tell me please retire to the opposite side of the street and whisper it. Meantime be quiet."

Duncan turned and made for the soda counter, beneath which was the till. His scanty roll of bills was in his right hand and there concealed. He stepped behind the counter, old Sam watching him with a amazement no less absolute than Pete's, pulled out the till, bent over it with an assured air and pushed back the coin slide. Then quite naturally he produced with his right hand his four hundred and odd dollars from the bill drawer, stood up and counted them with great deliberation.

"One, two, three, four." He smiled winningly at Pete. "Four hundred dollars, Mr. Sheriff. Now will you be good enough to hand over that note and the change and then put yourself in your face the pickle you're wearing in your face on the other side of the door?"

"I ain't got the note with me, Mr. Duncan."

"Then perhaps you won't mind going to the bank for it."

Half sufficed, Pete assented. "Aw, right, I'll go and get it. Kin I have the money?"

"Certainly," Duncan extended the bills, then on second thought withheld them. "I presume you're a regular sheriff?" he inquired.

Very proudly Pete turned back the lapel of his coat and distended the chest on which shone his nickel plated badge of office. Duncan examined it with grave admiration.

"It's beautiful," he said, with a sigh. "Here."

Gingerly Pete grasped the bills, thumbed them over to make sure they were real and bolted as for his life, his countails level on the breeze. There floated back to Duncan and old Sam his vaudeictory, "Waal, I'll be dod gasted!"

With a short, quiet laugh Duncan made as though to go out to the back yard, where the new stock was being delivered.

"I'm going," he said hurriedly, "to find me a hitcher and knock the stuffing out of some of those packing cases. Want to get all that truck indoors before nightfall, you know?"

But old Sam wasn't to be put off by any such obvious subterfuge as that. He put himself in front of Duncan.

"Nat, my boy," he said, tremulous, "I can't let this go through. I can't allow you—"

"There, now," Duncan told him unconcernedly, yet kindly, "don't say anything more. It's over and done with."

"But you mustn't. I'll turn over the story to you if—"

"O Lord!" Duncan's dismay was as genuine as his desire to escape Graham's gratitude. "No—don't! Please don't do that!"

(To be continued.)

PLAYS AND PLAYERS

Before an audience that taxed the capacity of the Grand opera house last night the charming Keyes Sisters opened their week's engagement. The company is exceptionally strong this season and carries an abundance of special scenery, the last act setting deserving special mention as being one of the most realistic boat scenes presented on any stage. Specialties were introduced between the acts by the Keyes Sisters in popular songs. Baby Velma danced and sang gracefully. But the hit of the evening was secured by the comedian, Chester Keyes. His songs were especially clever.

Tonight the company will produce "A Broken Heart," a pretty melodrama with all special scenery. Tickets are being given at the door for a chance on "Venus," the prize cow.

In the production of "The Merry Widow," which will be presented at the Grand soon, the music is, of course, the predominant attraction, for the Lehar score has won popularity everywhere that it has been played, and the waltz number in the second act has attained a success entitled to be called a world craze. In Mr. Savage's production there are twenty high class musicians in the orchestra. This orchestra under the brilliant direction of Mr. Frank Mandeville, gives the full Viennese orchestration with a vigor and charm that has never been equalled heretofore. The harp attracts special attention from music lovers, as it gives a note of distinction and elevation to the score that is most unusual in theaters. "The Merry Widow" score marks the passing of one-fingered orchestrations in the ragtime production of "Pin Pan Alley." Composer Lehar now wears the mantle bequeathed by Strauss, Suppe and Offenbach. His score has originality, dignity and abiding charm. It is the orchestration of the love passion, and as such it makes a universal appeal to men and women of all ages and conditions.

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